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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000588

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

DEPARTMENT FOR SA/INS

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SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 54 (04-07-03)
Classified by Ambassador Wills, Reasons 1.5 (b, d)

CONTENTS: MEETING THE PRESIDENT -- AND HER BROTHER
- LOCAL REACTION RE IRAQ

MEETING THE PRESIDENT -- AND HER BROTHER

[1](#)1. (C) Please see Colombo 587, which reviews the Ambassador's April 5 meeting with President Kumaratunga. (Note: By the way, CBK is slated to be in Chennai and New Delhi for four days. She has meetings with top GoI and opposition figures, including Sonia Gandhi and Jayalalitha.)

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador also met with Anura Bandaranaike, her brother and a senior PA MP, on April 7. Bandaranaike was in a relatively jovial mood and was more cogent than his sis. Re cohabitation, he thought it was working to some extent, but that a lot of tension remained between the president and the PM (no argument from us in that point!). He really did not see any possibility of the two sides' (PA and UNP) working together given all of the stresses. As we have reported, Bandaranaike was strongly in favor of the PA's working out a deal with the JVP. Like other PA'ers we have met, he thought the party could easily subsume the JVP, just as it had other left wing parties in the past. He admitted that the road to a formal PA/JVP alliance seemed to be getting a bit difficult, as the JVP had not yet agreed to the PA's plans re federalism as encapsulated in CBK's 2000 devolution plan. That said, Bandaranaike predicted a deal could be done by June (a bit later than we had heard before). If there was a deal, he did not think a snap election was immediately forthcoming, but he predicted one by next year. (POL)

LOCAL REACTION RE IRAQ

[1](#)3. (C) Local reaction re Iraq is real, real quiet. The papers have lots of coverage re the dramatic events re Baghdad, but editorials are moving on to other local subjects like the death penalty and whether a peace process referendum is necessary. As we reported to you, demonstrations in SL on Friday, April 4, were very, very small. We have heard no reports of future rallies at this point. When asked about Iraq, Anura Bandaranaike (see above) waved his hand, indicating that he preferred to talk about other, more relevant (and less contentious) subjects. (POL)

WILLS